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Official Records

First Committee

13th meeting

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New York

Chairman: Mr. De Alba ..... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): As agreed yesterday, we will continue today with formal statements by delegations. If there is enough time, we will move on to other items. There are 20 speakers on the list, however, so it is unlikely that we will have time to take up other issues.

It seems that we will not be able to have the Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs with us for a dialogue today, as the delegation of Sweden had suggested, because he is available only during the morning. It appears that we will have to cancel that proposed dialogue, although we thank Mr. Sergio Camacho-Lara for his willingness to participate. I believe that his participation next year would be very beneficial to our work. We know that he is ready and willing to participate. I think at some point later on, when we look at the programme of work of the sixtieth session, we will be able to come back to this issue.

Mr. Rabbâni (Afghanistan): As I am taking the floor for the first time during this session, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that the abilities and long-standing experience you and the other members of the Bureau are bringing to our discussion will guide the work of this body to a positive outcome.

Certainly, all of the items on the agenda of the First Committee are extremely important for global peace and security. Among them, the two items that are fundamental to the peace, security and stability of my country are the issues of small arms and light weapons and of anti-personnel mines. Regrettably, today, post-conflict Afghanistan suffers from both of these scourges. I will briefly discuss these two issues, which are fundamental to the consolidation of peace and security in Afghanistan.

Millions of small arms and light weapons in circulation pose the greatest threat to the stability and economic and social development of Afghanistan. An earlier estimate by United Nations experts put the number of small arms in the country at around 10 million. Fortunately, recent analysis places the actual number at less than 1.5 million weapons. However, despite being less than previously thought, the presence of small arms and light weapons in the hands of non-State actors is a formidable challenge for the Government, and their collection remains the highest priority. There is a unanimous agreement among the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and the international community that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants must take place in order for peace to take hold. They are all aware of the fact that DDR is vital

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for the promotion of reconstruction, maintenance of peace and the prevention of relapse into conflict.

For the disarmament efforts to succeed in post-conflict societies such as Afghanistan, they should be carried out with patience and in conjunction with reconciliation efforts in order to build trust and confidence. In addition to these efforts, the consistent and continued support and assistance of the international community is crucial for the success of DDR in Afghanistan. The reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life and finding alternative livelihoods for them can only be possible with the support of the international community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Japan, the lead nation in the DDR process currently under way, for its valuable and generous support.

Afghanistan supports the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We believe that it is an important step towards curbing the excessive accumulation and the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We therefore call upon Member States and the international community to take appropriate measures to curb the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons.

The second challenge that post-conflict Afghanistan confronts today is the presence of large amounts of landmines and unexploded ordnance that kill or maim 10 to 12 people each day. Although all sides involved in the armed conflict planted landmines during the war, the majority of the landmines were planted indiscriminately over most of the country by former Soviet forces and the pro-Soviet Afghan Government during the years of Soviet occupation of the country. According to the United Nations estimate, there are five to 10 million landmines in Afghanistan and approximately 11 per cent of the total land area is contaminated with mines, making Afghanistan one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Roads, agricultural areas, irrigation canals, villages and even areas close to the capital city of Kabul are infested with landmines. The presence of landmines in these areas obstructs economic development, reconstruction and the repatriation of refugees. Their elimination is, therefore, crucial for the emergence of an economically sound and politically stable Afghanistan.

We are of the view that mine action should be considered an important component of any humanitarian and development assistance to the mine-affected countries. As a result of increased international attention, mine-clearance operations have gained momentum in the last few years. Large parts of the country have been cleared. However, many other parts still remain infested with mines. As a country that has experienced terrible human suffering and continues to experience the devastation caused by landmines, Afghanistan supports the draft resolution on implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Afghanistan supports all international efforts aimed at achieving a mine-free world and acceded to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines in March 2003. We are thankful to the international community for their active support in the mine-clearance campaign in Afghanistan. We are convinced that this support will continue.

Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the financial support and technical cooperation provided by the Governments of the United States, Japan and the European Union for the mine clearing operations in Afghanistan.

Mr. Bar (Israel): I would like to make a general statement outlining Israel's position with regards to conventional arms.

In view of the growing threat arising from the misuse and indiscriminate use of conventional arms, these weapons deserve particular attention on the part of the international community. The history of warfare is one in which tremendous civilian casualties have resulted solely from the use of conventional weapons. Conventional weapons in the hands of terrorists or countries that support terrorists can have a strategic impact, adding to the humanitarian devastation that they cause. The lessons of history, combined with a concern for the future, offer several important perspectives with respect to conventional arms and armaments.

First, armaments in and of themselves do not pose threats, as aptly phrased many years ago in the saying, "A sword never kills anybody; it is a tool in the killer's hand." It is the poisonous combination of extensive armaments and hostile intentions that constitute the genuine threat.

Secondly, States must bear in mind that the need for armaments is in many cases a legitimate response to a given situation in which States are compelled to defend and secure their territory and populations. Building trust and confidence in a region will reduce the need for armaments. When nations live together in a spirit of peace and good neighbourliness, it will be possible to reduce armaments and increase transparency.

At the same time, it is important that arms be controlled and restraint be exercised by each and every State, in order to prevent unnecessary human suffering and loss of innocent life. The consequence of the uncontrolled spread of conventional weapons, or worse, their acquisition by terrorist or criminal elements, is invariably the loss of innocent life. It is for this reason that my Government views the irresponsible use and transfer of conventional arms as a serious threat to regional and global security and stability. We believe that the best way to curb illicit arms proliferation throughout the world is through strong national commitment and determination. States bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that no weapons are transferred from their territory without proper oversight.

The scourge of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons has brought about new threats to civilians in the form of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). As we stated during the general debate, we believe that these weapons deserve particular attention by the international community.

Israel believes that confidence-building measures are an effective and significant instrument for improving relations and promoting good-neighbourliness in the regional and subregional contexts. Such measures must be mutually agreed upon and have the objective of enhancing States' sense of security, thereby reducing tensions. In considering such steps, however, we must bear in mind the specific nature of conflicts, circumstances and threats in various regions. Some measures that are applicable and can contribute to stability in certain regions could have the opposite effect in other regions and could, in fact, result in reckless arms races.

In that context, it should be noted that confidence-building measures are a means to achieve peace and security. They should not be considered a reward, as they are an essential element in the process leading to trust, confidence and peace. Israel is of the view that ideas on how to promote and identify regional confidence-building measures should be, first and foremost, developed and agreed upon in the relevant regional and subregional contexts. Such measures should be presented and negotiated, freely and directly, between the regional parties with a view to reducing tensions and facilitating political dialogue and cooperation. We believe that that sequence should be preserved if confidence-building measures are to attain their objectives.

Moreover, confidence-building measures cannot be imposed by some States or even by the international community. Imposing such measures would not be conducive to the building of trust and confidence at the regional and subregional levels. In that regard, we welcome the idea of creating a database on confidence-building measures already in place in various regions.

Transparency in armaments can serve as a useful instrument for reducing tensions. We believe that, in principle, the success of transparency is contingent upon the normalization of political and military relations among the States of a region. At the same time, Israel is convinced that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important instrument and that its contribution to regional and global stability and security is undoubted. Since the inception of that instrument, Israel has responded annually to the Register with regard to its seven categories of major battle weapons. We have done so despite the fact that our region has suffered continuing threats and a lack of basic trust between nations. Israel has decided to act in that way with the purpose of building confidence.

Unfortunately, there have been no significant developments in the Middle East region with regard to broader participation by States in the United Nations Register or the beginning of a dialogue on regional transparency mechanisms. We hope that other countries will join us in participating in that instrument with a view to its universalization.

Israel attaches particular importance to action aimed at preventing and minimizing human suffering resulting from the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. Israel believes that an integral component of the effort to address that threat is cooperation. Cooperative initiatives in the areas of mine clearance, mine awareness and victim rehabilitation are important

and contribute greatly to efforts aimed at alleviating the humanitarian problems associated with mines.

Israel has taken a number of unilateral steps as well, including ceasing all production of anti-personnel landmines, declaring a moratorium on the export of all types of anti-personnel mines and ratifying the Amended Protocol II annexed to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). Israel hopes that other nations in the region will join us in establishing cooperative mechanisms aimed at reducing the threat posed by such weapons, preferably within the context of a comprehensive regional peace.

As a high contracting party to the CCW, we see the Convention as a good example of how States can act to restrain the use of arms without compromising their vital national security interests. Israel has actively participated in the negotiations on Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, with a view to reducing the humanitarian effects of the explosive remnants of war in post-conflict situations. We welcome the adoption of the Protocol by the States parties to the CCW, and we look forward to the continuation of the process within the framework of the Convention.

Although Israel shares the humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa Treaty, we cannot commit ourselves, owing to regional circumstances and the continued threat of terrorism, to a total ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines. We have, however, taken part in several international initiatives aimed at promoting mine awareness and support for the victims of those terrible weapons.

Finally, we cannot conclude our reference to the issue of conventional arms without mentioning the problem of terrorism. Terrorism makes no distinction with regard to its victims. All of us are threatened by that phenomenon, and all of us have a responsibility to stop it. We reiterate our call to our neighbours and other States to cease all support for the perpetrators of such crimes and especially the supply of weapons and explosives. There is no justification for the transfer of arms, mines, rockets or man-portable defence systems to terrorists. We expect all States to do everything in their power to prevent such transfer.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Brazil, who will speak on behalf of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR).

Mr. Paranhos (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall speak first on small arms and light weapons and then on anti-personnel mines.

The statistics reported to us show that, at present, one person dies every minute as a victim of a small arm or light weapon. That reality indicates the alarming magnitude of the problem, which also affects our region. For that reason, on behalf of the member States of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR), Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and its associated States, Bolivia, Chile and Peru, I wish to make a few observations.

Our countries have repeatedly expressed their will to identify avenues of cooperation at various levels aimed at confronting this scourge. At the global level, our countries have been active, through individual or collective initiatives, in implementing the Programme of Action adopted at the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Those initiatives were presented at the first Biennial Meeting of States on the implementation of that plan.

Similarly, at the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, our countries expressed their wishes regarding the need for and the nature of such an instrument. In the deliberations, we agreed that the accumulation of small arms and light weapons, their uncontrolled proliferation and their improper use pose a grave threat to the peace and stability of many regions throughout the world, with humanitarian consequences of a diverse nature. Therefore, a universal and legally binding international instrument would be essential in helping States to confront the problems related to small arms and light weapons.

At the regional level, those principles are reflected in the actions undertaken within the framework of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, in which the MERCOSUR countries have played a leading role. That has enabled us to make progress, not only in the area of training or information, but also, and principally, in that of cooperation.

At the subregional level, several initiatives are already under way. Some of those initiatives are

individual, such as the annual or biennial destruction of small arms and light weapons; others complement regional activities and are aimed at global cooperation. Worthy of note is the work being done by the MERCOSUR Working Group on Firearms and Ammunition, whose last meeting was held in Buenos Aires in March 2004. Among its activities is the process of identifying compatible national legislation, which is being stepped up. Likewise, continued progress is being made on issues related to subregional cooperation, such as creating a joint register of purchasers and sellers of firearms, weapon parts and ammunition; monitoring the movement of registered weapons; and exchanging information in real time.

MERCOSUR is fully aware of the need to work together in the subregional context in order to prevent weapons from being diverted to the illegal market. In this regard, on 7 July, a Memorandum of Understanding was adopted by the members of MERCOSUR regarding the exchange of information on firearms, munitions, explosives and other related materials. Subregional activities will continue in this direction, with a meeting that is scheduled to be held in Brasilia next November.

As to the development of information and awareness campaigns on the dangers of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, our States are counting on the support of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have formed their own subregional action network and have taken an active stand and have become an important instrument for such actions.

While our subregion has been successful in certain areas, the magnitude of the problem is great. It knows no borders, and it has the dangerous feature of easy infiltration among the populations of the world that are most vulnerable for different social or economic reasons. For this reason, we want to underscore the importance of cooperation as the only possible way of achieving effective results. This type of cooperation would include financial, technical and legal aspects, involving Governments and civil societies. Any national or subregional initiative will be doomed to fail if it does not achieve regional and global support. We must not forget that we are all faced with the problem and, therefore, its solution rests exclusively on us all.

Turning to anti-personnel mines, MERCOSUR member States and associated States have, for a number of years now, spoken in unison regarding the subject of anti-personnel mines. This is not a coincidence; rather, it is a consequence of the route we are travelling together. Our journey began with a declaration of the subregion as a zone of peace, whereby measures were adopted for the total elimination of the weapons that we are considering here today.

We continued along this route with the declaration of a Western Hemisphere free of anti-personnel mines, in the framework of the Organization of American States. We then moved forward to the signing and ratification of the Ottawa Convention.

But our journey did not end with those treaty signings; we also have begun processes that are at present being implemented by our countries. An example of this is the destruction that took place or is taking place in each country of the arsenals under their jurisdiction in order to fulfil the commitments undertaken. These actions are not limited to the geographical limits of our subregion; they extend to more distant areas, where members of our armed forces are cooperating in the de-mining process within the framework of peacekeeping operations.

The MERCOSUR member States and associated States, as part of a continent that has been a victim of the permanent consequences of anti-personnel mines, recall that the effects of those weapons extend both the time and destructive nature of the conflicts that led to their use. Hence, we are aware of the importance of the universalization of the Ottawa Convention, and we welcome the fact that at the present time the number of signatory States is increasing, and that the results achieved thus far, while insufficient, are encouraging. In this regard, it suffices to recall that over 30 million mines have already been destroyed. We also must remember, however, that over 250 million are still estimated to exist.

In conclusion, may I add that MERCOSUR and its associated States will continue to be committed to the objectives of the Ottawa Convention, not only in its legal or disarmament aspects but also in its humanitarian ones. In this connection, we will attend the Review Conference to take place from 29 November to 3 December of this year in Nairobi. We believe it will be a good opportunity to reaffirm our

commitment to the objectives established in the Convention.

Mr. Rivasseau (France) (*spoke in French*): This year, once again, we have noted that the question of conventional weapons, in particular that of small arms and light weapons, has been a subject of major concern for the entire international community. It is on this type of weapons that the most significant progress has been made in terms of disarmament or arms control. Not only has there been a real awareness of the humanitarian scourges resulting from certain types of conventional weapons; but it also seems that the international community has the will to fight them — or at least, to limit the most unacceptable forms of those weapons. My country welcomes these developments. France has participated in, supported and backed all discussions and negotiations under way on this question.

We have made substantial progress over the past few years. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects has everyone's support, but its implementation requires a dogged will to succeed. As regards the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, which has shown its effectiveness in humanitarian terms, this year will see the First Review Conference of this important treaty, thanks to which the scourge of mines has diminished and is continuing to diminish, even though significant efforts are still awaited from States parties to that instrument and, even more, from those still outside that regime.

Under the leadership of Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands, we had the recent conclusion of a legally binding instrument applicable to explosive remains of war annexed to the 1980 Geneva Convention on Conventional Weapons. There also were intensive and productive discussions on anti-vehicle mines and on preventive measures that could be applied to certain types of ammunition, again, within the framework of the 1980 Convention. That Convention has shown its effectiveness and demonstrated that great humanitarian progress could be made in this forum, which has the participation of the major users of certain conventional weapons as well.

Of course, I need to add to this picture by drawing attention to the significance of the negotiations under way on the marking and tracing of light weapons, a French-Swiss initiative to which, Mr. Chairman, you know we are deeply dedicated. The first session of those negotiations, under the highly skilled guidance of Ambassador Thalmann, I think is quite promising.

We cannot rest on our laurels. Even though outstanding progress has been made, a great deal remains to be done. New subjects of concern are emerging; these involve both the legacy of old conflicts and the emergence of new threats in an environment of security that is uncertain and changeable. We believe that the accumulation of certain types of weapons and their uncontrolled distribution, in particular small arms and light weapons and certain types of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), as well as the risk that they may be acquired for purposes of destabilization or terrorist acts, is a major concern. These threats must be confronted. All cooperative actions to this end on the national, regional or international level are most welcome.

Today, I would like to underscore a subject of concern that, in our view, deserves discussion in the General Assembly — namely, the stockpiling of surplus conventional weapons. Within the European space, we have noted over the last few years increased requests for assistance from various States confronted with the management of significant stocks of surplus conventional weapons. Those stocks, accumulated for several years now, contain obsolete, dangerous munitions that fulfil no imperative security need. There are often stockpiled in dangerous conditions, entailing the risk of explosion near populated areas. In addition, there is the risk of environmental impact and the risk of those munitions falling into the hands of non-State actors.

Bulgaria expressed the hope that this debate would take place. We can only welcome that initiative, which reflects the necessary awareness of States vis-à-vis this problem. A draft decision has been submitted to the First Committee, of which we are a sponsor.

France believes that a more intensive debate on this question could usefully begin next year.

Mr. Hansen (Norway): Anti-personnel mines, unexploded ordnance and the proliferation of small arms pose a serious challenge to human security. That challenge must be dealt with in multilateral forums and meet with a multilateral response.

The United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons is part of our collective response. Its full implementation is an urgent and important task. Next year's biennial meeting will provide an opportunity to consider the national, regional and global steps taken to implement the Programme.

Norway supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and highly appreciates the efforts of its Chair, Ambassador Thalmann of Switzerland. We hope for a successful outcome of the negotiations on an international instrument and will continue to contribute to that objective. Norway believes that we should aim for a legally binding instrument.

The illicit brokering of small arms is also a key concern. Brokering remains largely unregulated, as only approximately 20 countries worldwide have legislation in that area. To prevent illicit brokering, legitimate and licit activities in this area need to be regulated. Under the Dutch-Norwegian initiative on illicit brokering, we and the Netherlands have been working together with regional organizations to help countries establish such legislation. We believe regional organizations also have an important role to play in international cooperation, which is necessary for implementing laws that regulate small arms brokering.

Norway considers it important and timely to go ahead and examine more closely whether there is a need for an international instrument on brokering. Consultations carried out by the Secretary-General since the previous session of the First Committee, on the basis of last year's resolution, show that the issue is relevant. We hope that we can reach an agreement on starting such work soon and that we can reflect that in this year's omnibus resolution on small arms and light weapons.

Effective systems for information on and verification of end-users and end-use of small arms are essential to control not only brokering but all aspects of illicit trade in small arms. That issue also figures in the United Nations Programme of Action. Time is ripe for consultation among States on how to establish such systems for end-user certificates.

It is our hope that we will be able to report on good progress in these and other areas at next year's biennial meeting and agree on further steps at the 2006 Review Conference.

The easy availability and mobility of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) make this weapon ideal for terrorists and other non-State actors. The illicit transfer of MANPADS poses a real threat to civil aviation and constitutes a grave security concern. The draft resolution presented by Australia is timely and welcome and enjoys our full support.

The Mine Ban Convention is a success. Every day, its implementation strengthens human security and reduces humanitarian risk for civil populations. However, landmines still threaten the life and well-being of people in all regions of the world. It is a real and serious obstacle to return, reconstruction, development and normalization. It is possible to rid the world of that threat. That is the aim of the Convention. Next month, the First Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention will take place in Nairobi. At the Nairobi meeting, we must recommit to finishing the job and decide how to address the remaining challenges, universalize the Convention, destroy stockpiles, clear mines and assist victims.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has been strengthened with a new legally binding Protocol on explosive remnants of war. Hopefully, that new instrument will be ratified swiftly so that it can soon enter into force and enhance the safety of people on the ground. To further reduce the humanitarian risk caused by the use of certain munitions, the next logical step is to develop an instrument on measures to prevent munitions from becoming explosive remnants of war. We are actively engaged in the CCW Group of Governmental Experts, which considers the implementation of principles of international humanitarian law and the design of certain munitions and submunitions. We look forward to continuing those important discussions.

It is also time to start negotiating on a new protocol dealing with the humanitarian challenges posed by mines other than anti-personnel mines. We are happy to co-sponsor the draft resolution on the CCW submitted by Sweden and hope it can be adopted without a vote.

Ms. McDonald (New Zealand): While weapons of mass destruction understandably dominate today's headlines and the concerns of Member States, this class of weapons should not distract the international

community's attention from the deaths, injuries and injustices that are caused every day by the illegal use and misuse of conventional weapons. In a number of forums, New Zealand continues to work towards strengthening international humanitarian law and reducing the excessive and unnecessary harm caused by conventional weapons.

On small arms, we strongly support the statement made by the Ambassador of Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum. While much of our work on small arms continues to be focused on preventing gun violence in the Pacific, we are increasingly aware of the lack of binding international controls on the small arms trade that continues to fuel armed conflicts around the world. For that reason, New Zealand will be lending its full support to Oxfam's initiative for an arms trade treaty. We commend Oxfam's work in taking a new approach to stopping the irresponsible transfer of small arms to countries that violate human rights and international humanitarian law.

The [illegible]i Summit, scheduled to take place later this year, will represent a landmark event for the Ottawa Convention banning the use of anti-personnel mines. The universalization of the Convention, the mobilization of resources for mine action, increased understanding and attention to the problems faced by victims and the strength of the norm against the use of anti-personnel mines will stand as testimony to the commitment of States parties, international organizations and non-governmental organizations towards realizing the objective of a world free of anti-personnel mines.

New Zealand continues to strongly support work under way on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Last year, we welcomed the agreement on Protocol V to the CCW addressing explosive remnants of war. Protocol V broke new ground by recognizing that parties to a conflict have an obligation to take responsibility for the munitions they have deployed and to take measures to reduce the risk of harm to civilians.

New Zealand is currently working towards ratification of the Protocol. We believe that the ongoing relevance of the CCW Convention will depend on its response to the concern that the international community is voicing with increasing strength about the unnecessary suffering that submunitions cause to civilians.

Mr. Niang (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I will focus exclusively on small arms and light weapons, particularly in West Africa.

In the course of the last decade, in the West African region, eight million firearms — half of them used in criminal activities — killed three million people, including two million children, and left five million homeless. This has been compounded by, and even caused by, a rise in mercenary activities and a weakening in the political and social fabric of many States of the region, along with its corollary, the pauperization of large segments of the population.

However, it must be recognized that for a few months now this apocalyptic picture has been yielding to hope, as many countries of the subregion have experienced the beginnings of peace that we hope will be lasting. That normalization was brought about, inter alia, by the strong mobilization on the part of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with the support of the international community. That mobilization for peace and security has, however, never been lacking in our subregion. Suffice it to recall the Senegalese experience and that of the Economic Community of West African States.

The dangers of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) were understood very early on by the Government of Senegal, which, in 1966, enacted a law on arms and munitions in conjunction with the strictest of controls on the activities of those who produce, market and supply weapons, which were all registered by the State, and also in conjunction with an arsenal of administrative and criminal sanctions levied on violators. The existence of this mechanism explains to a great extent the very low level of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Senegal.

In the West African context, States, having learned from the recurrence of brutal conflicts that had erupted here and there, had the wisdom to see the potential seriousness of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and in 1998 adopted the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa. That moratorium was rounded out by a framework for implementation called the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), which is divided into nine priority areas, including the promotion of a culture of

peace in the region, the collection and destruction of arms surpluses and the strengthening of border controls.

The results obtained thus far are decisive and encouraging. I therefore want to ask Member States to give their complete support to draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.21, which was submitted by Mali on behalf of ECOWAS and is entitled, "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them".

But, do those efforts at the national and subregional levels suffice to eliminate that scourge? What about the global context? At the international level it is true that progress has been made. An example of that is the adoption of the Programme of Action that resulted from the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held here in New York in July 2001. Nonetheless, a closer look reveals that bolder measures are needed to root out that problem. My delegation therefore hopes that the efforts of the Working Group on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons will lead to the clear choice of a credible legal instrument that will serve as a deterrent because it is legally binding.

In the view of my delegation, this outcome would be a good way to counter the whole organized network of traffickers who lurk in the shadows, lured by the appeal of easy profits. The fate of millions of people in West Africa and elsewhere in the world would thereby be considerably improved.

Ms. Nicholson (Canada): Conventional weapons directly affect people in their daily lives and in their immediate communities. Our approach to many conventional weapons issues goes well beyond traditional arms control and is impelled by human security, humanitarian concerns and international humanitarian and human rights law. Positive progress has been witnessed in the last year, reflecting widespread collective determination to address the issues of small arms, landmines and conventional weapons. It is clear, however, that much remains to be done.

States have accepted the responsibility to protect their citizens from the negative and far-reaching impact of the uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons with the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action in 2001. We are all familiar with the perils associated with those weapons, which kill an estimated 300,000 people per year in conflict situations alone. But those are not just empty numbers. They are attached to real financial and human costs for States.

The easy availability and misuse of small arms impede economic development, hinder access to basic services such as health and education, contribute to criminal and gender-based violence, and destroy community livelihoods. Uncontrolled proliferation and misuse also interfere with conflict prevention measures, fuel armed conflict, obstruct provision of humaniterian assistance, and cause damage and delay to peace-building efforts. Those realities should be recognized and reflected in our work here in the First Committee.

In 2001 States committed themselves to take action to address both supply and demand with respect to the illicit trade in small arms. Today we have the opportunity to make real progress on that issue by adopting a credible and effective resolution on small arms and light weapons that addresses its important aspects. The activities of arms brokers are central to the illicit small arms trade, diverting weapons to illicit destinations and undesirable end-users. Numerous United Nations panels have determined time and again that brokers undermined arms embargoes to countries such as Angola, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

Given the significant challenge that illicit brokering poses to international efforts to control the proliferation and misuse of small arms, it is Canada's view that a group of governmental experts is essential to furthering progress. Such a group's report would provide a better understanding of this complex issue, informing States as we consider the best way forward to combat illicit brokering. The very important work of the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing, which Canada strongly supports, is scheduled to conclude in June 2005, so that a separate process of such a group of experts would not overlap or interfere with this process in any way.

Canada's priority is to see real and substantive progress achieved at the 2005 and 2006 United Nations meetings on the Programme of Action and to deliver on our commitments to reduce the human suffering caused by small arms and light weapons. In our view, important issues deserving international attention

include developing common principles on transfer controls, civilian possession of military-style weapons, transfers to non-State actors and enforcement of United Nations arms embargoes. Further policy research and development is needed to identify gaps in international responses, allocate resources accordingly and prepare to advance our work in 2005 and 2006. Now is the time to act creatively and constructively to achieve our common goals.

Another area where we can make people safer is the elimination of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. This is a landmark year for global efforts against such mines. The first Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, which will take place at the 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World, is expected to be the most important gathering in this campaign since the Convention's international signing conference in 1997 in Ottawa.

In Nairobi, we will celebrate the significant progress achieved in our common effort to spare civilians and communities from the threat of anti-personnel mines. The Convention has become a key instrument for human security, addressing the humanitarian, disarmament, and development aspects of anti-personnel mines. Significant challenges remain, however, in order to finish the job of fully implementing the Convention, which will be a key focus of the Nairobi Summit.

The conference's preparations have been characterized by the same partnership and sense of common purpose that have marked the Ottawa process since its inception. We expect this spirit of cooperation to result in an ambitious action plan, where States parties will commit to intensifying and accelerating their efforts in mine clearance and risk education, in victim assistance, in the destruction of stockpiles, and in universalizing this Convention and strengthening the stigmatization of the use and production of and trade in anti-personnel mines.

We look forward to a declaration which sends a clear and determined message to the world, reaffirming the unwavering commitment at the highest possible levels to sustaining attention and forever eradicating the threat of anti-personnel mines.

In addition to our emphasis on continued progress in ridding the world of the threat of anti-personnel mines, Canada remains concerned with the impact of other types of unexploded ordnance. We strongly support the new legally binding Protocol within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), addressing the post-conflict aspects of explosive remnants of war, whose implementation will make a difference on the ground. We are in the process of preparing our ratification and encourage all States to do likewise, so that it can enter into force as soon as possible.

While the adoption of this Protocol is an important success, our work is not yet complete. Some specific weapons continue to have a significant impact on civilians and to hinder humanitarian operations. Canada therefore wants the CCW to continue discussions aimed at improving the design of specific munitions likely to result in explosive remnants of war, including submunitions, with a view to minimizing the humanitarian risk of those munitions becoming explosive remnants of war.

In the area of anti-vehicle mines, we support increased technical standards and the prohibition of the use of such undetectable mines; we are a co-sponsor of the 30-nation proposal; and we will be working to achieve agreement at the forthcoming CCW annual meeting on a broad negotiating mandate with a view to adopting a legally binding instrument.

In conclusion, making people safer from armed violence must be our benchmark for measuring progress and furthering work to address these multifaceted and important issues. Canada's overarching approach to these issues focuses on making people and their communities safer. We will continue our active engagement in various regional and multilateral bodies, including our chairmanship of the Human Security Network, to achieve this goal. These are all areas where real progress, in both policy terms and on the ground, has been achieved. Let us all remain determined to further advance in this direction.

Mr. Lezona (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Anti-personnel mines and explosive ordnance hamper the free movement of people in certain areas of the world and stand in the way of the use of arable land — a major impediment to development. These deadly and devastating devices contribute to exacerbating poverty, destitution and suffering, with regard not only to the victims but also to their families and communities.

The Republic of the Congo, which has in the south-west zones that are presumed to be mined, is now engaged in taking national measures to ensure the

effective implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and of the Common African Position on Anti-personnel Landmines, adopted by the African ministers on 23 September 2004 in New York.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank once again the Government of Canada, whose financial support allowed the Government of the Congo to organize in Brazzaville in 2003 an awareness-raising workshop on the implementation of the Ottawa Convention as well the destruction of a stockpile of 5,136 anti-personnel landmines from the military arsenal in September of that year.

Regarding demining, an expert mission was sent to evaluate the extent of the zones that are presumed to be mined. My delegation appeals to the international community to provide us with assistance to implement the humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

My country, moreover, has great expectations of the Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention planned for 29 November to 3 December 2004 at Nairobi, Kenya, with a view to the international community's universalizing the Convention.

That is why my country, wishing to see the advent of a world without mines and a better tomorrow, has — as it always has in the past — joined other countries in sponsoring the draft resolution on this item, which is contained in document A/C.1/59/L.40 on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Ms. Sanders (United States of America): It is a pleasure, Sir, to see you chairing this meeting.

The United States is committed to advancing the humanitarian agenda with respect to landmines. As part of its landmine policy, the United States has decided to pursue, in the Conference on Disarmament, negotiation of an international ban on the sale or export of all persistent landmines. The United States believes that this proposal would complement, not harm, related activities in other forums.

The United States is pursuing a multifaceted approach involving several forums to address the humanitarian problems posed by the indiscriminate use of persistent landmines. We want to take advantage of the unique qualities of these various forums.

The framework provided by the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is well suited to addressing issues involving the use of landmines. The United States, along with Denmark and 28 other sponsors, is pursuing at the CCW a proposal to subject anti-vehicle mines to restrictions similar to those that the CCW's Amended Mines Protocol currently places on anti-personnel landmines.

The Group of Governmental Experts of the CCW States parties held a two-week meeting in Geneva on that proposal in July, and the Group will meet again in early November.

The Conference on Disarmament, however, is the international community's primary forum for multilateral arms control negotiations. As such, it is well suited to address issues such as the sale and export of mines. The proposed ban on the sale or export of persistent landmines would make no distinction between anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines or between remotely delivered and hand-emplaced mines. It therefore would cover mine types beyond those addressed in the CCW's Amended Mines Protocol or the 30-nation proposal in the CCW.

However, since the proposed ban would deal only with sales and exports, it would not touch upon use, stockpiling or production, as other instruments or proposals do. This proposal in no way detracts from or dilutes the Ottawa Convention. Ottawa Convention parties can fulfil their commitments under the Convention and simultaneously support this complementary effort to reduce the long-term landmine threat to innocent civilians.

The United States hopes that its negotiating partners in Geneva will agree to begin negotiating on a ban on the sale or export of persistent landmines when the Conference on Disarmament reconvenes in January.

Mr. Owoseni (Nigeria): I am very happy to see you, Sir, chairing this meeting.

The problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is of particular concern to Nigeria, as it constitutes a major impediment to peace, stability, security and economic development in many developing countries. Such arms continue to have devastating consequences on the African continent given their capacity to fuel, intensify and prolong

conflicts. I need not mention the destruction, in catastrophic proportions, of the economic and social infrastructure in the affected countries resulting from the illicit use of these weapons.

As conflicts drag on, the need for more arms grows, thus perpetuating the vicious circle. That is simply because small arms and light weapons are the weapons of choice in most conflict situations. It is estimated that there are about 650 million small arms in the world today, and about 500,000 people die each year from their use. Of the estimated 4 million war-related deaths during the 1990s, 90 per cent of those killed were civilians, and 80 per cent of that number were women and children, mostly victims of the misuse of small arms and light weapons. The proliferation of these weapons has also hindered global humanitarian efforts and exacerbated the phenomenon of child soldiers.

Africa remains the continent most affected by the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. For that reason, the Nigerian delegation welcomes all efforts by the international community to address this problem. In this regard, we wish to re-emphasize the importance of the early and full implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

Nigeria recognizes the spirit behind the adoption of this document and believes that it will continue to serve as a guide in our cooperative efforts in tackling the illicit proliferation of small arms. My delegation also reaffirms its commitment to the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons of December 2000. The position expressed in the Declaration remain as valid today as it was in 2000, when it was adopted.

In this regard, we view as a positive development the recent convening of the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. The most crucial issue that this Working Group should now resolve is the issue of the nature of the instrument itself. Considering the extent of the devastation that illicit small arms and light weapons have continued to cause globally, especially in the African region, and the urgent need to curb the menace, it is imperative that the instrument to be negotiated should further advance the political commitments already expressed in the Programme of Action on Small Arms to a higher level.

The proposed instrument should address the problem of tracing illicit small arms and light weapons in a more fundamental way. It is, therefore, essential that such an instrument is legally binding, for its effective implementation. It is our belief that the success of the Working Group will have a positive impact on the forthcoming second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects at the National, Regional and Global Levels in 2005 and the review conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms in 2006.

In Africa, one of the greatest difficulties in controlling the illicit proliferation of small arms is the fact of their easy accessibility to non-State actors. Consistent calls on the international community, particularly arms producing and supplying countries, to limit the trade in small arms and light weapons to Governments and registered licensed traders has been largely ignored. This matter was underscored in the Bamako Declaration. It is worthy of note that the failure of the international community to hold arms manufacturers, their agents and brokers to account has been largely responsible for the uncontrolled illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa, with its attendant consequences on the continent.

It is common knowledge that one of the most effective strategies for dealing with the problem of illicit small arms trade is to control it from the source. Many countries, particularly in Africa, are ill-equipped to counter the massive flow of illicit arms into their territories from manufacturers and suppliers, especially in situations where there are willing partners in the form of rebel groups. The international community should, therefore, agree on imposition of appropriate sanctions on arms manufacturers and suppliers who divert their arms exports to illicit networks. The existence of this practice further reinforces the argument for a legally binding instrument on tracing these weapons.

The cooperation of the international community is also needed to intensify efforts in investigating and

identifying the link between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the illicit exploitation of natural and other resources, particularly those of some countries in Africa. It is common knowledge that the proceeds from illegal exploitation of Africa's natural resources are sometimes channelled into funding illicit arms trade in the continent. We encourage the application of appropriate sanctions to any individual, company, Government or non-State actor that may be found to be involved in this practice.

Many African States have undertaken various initiatives at different levels to address the common challenge of illicit small arms trade. These efforts are made out of a deep concern over the devastating effects of the illicit trade in small and light weapons on peace, security, stability and sustainable development in the continent. Unfortunately, Africa has not had much success in controlling this illicit trade in concrete terms since the United Nations conference on the subject in 2001. Rather, the continent has witnessed continued proliferation of these weapons, resulting, in some cases, in greater problems of political instability and armed conflict.

This regrettable situation may be due in part to lack of means to meet the overwhelming challenge. However, the greatest difficulty by far encountered by African countries is that of lack of international cooperation, particularly from arms suppliers and manufacturers, who maintain the continued influx of illicit small arms into the region. The international community, as represented in this Committee, must seriously address this aspect of the problem.

Illicit trade in small arms has always obstructed the implementation of arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council. The establishment of an independent panel of experts and monitoring mechanisms by the Council to promote compliance with arms embargoes is a welcome development. However, while this measure may be useful in controlling the illegal cross-border movement of small arms into conflict areas, it is ineffective in controlling and eliminating those arms that are already inside the areas of conflict. We therefore emphasize the need for effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes, which should normally include weapons collection, storage and destruction.

Experience has shown that the failure of DDR programmes in many post-conflict situations is principally due to the non-inclusion of such programmes in ceasefire agreements and in the mandates and budgets for United Nations peacekeeping operations. DDR programmes, as well as programmes for weapons collection, storage and destruction, that rely entirely on extrabudgetary resources or voluntary contributions for their implementation often suffer disappointing failures, resulting in some cases in the reignition of armed conflict and consequently in an increased demand for illicit small arms.

It is nevertheless acknowledged that the collapse of DDR programmes could, to some extent, be attributable to the failure of the international community to provide adequate financial assistance to countries emerging from conflict. However, secure funding from the assessed budget for peacekeeping would ensure the return of ex-combatants to their communities under planned reintegration activities, as required by the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1325 (2000). Nigeria, therefore, wishes once again to urge the international community to recognize the crucial importance of incorporating DDR programmes into ceasefire agreements as well as into the mandates and budgets for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

In addressing the threat posed by illicit small arms trafficking, there is need for cooperative relationship between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which would represent the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly. While the Security Council is responsible for peacekeeping operations and arms embargoes as well as other political measures relating to countries in conflict, the Department for Disarmament Affairs is seized with practical disarmament measures, including responsibility for the regional centres for peace and disarmament. The two Departments have an interest in weapons collection and destruction in post-conflict areas. We appreciate the role of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) within the United Nations system. However, a more integral approach involving the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department for Disarmament Affairs is absolutely essential for success in post-conflict peacekeeping initiatives.

Nigeria, for its part, remains committed to the fight against illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and has, over the years, taken steps and

major initiatives in that direction. In 2001, Nigeria joined other member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in renewing, for a second three-year period, the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa.

On 7 May 2001, two months prior to the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Nigerian National Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which maintains a strong permanent relationship with the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat in implementing the Moratorium. We have been steadfast in our respect for this Moratorium. With the establishment of the National Committee, we now have a national arms register and database. The Committee has also organized several training workshops and seminars for stakeholders on the issue of small arms.

Nigeria operates a strict firearms regime as further proof of our determination to keep these weapons out of circulation in the country. Under Nigeria's Firearms Control Act, the possession or acquisition of firearms for personal use requires approval from the highest authority. This effort is extended to the borders. In a three-phase training programme, with support provided by the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Nigeria has trained over 200 border security personnel in modern methods of interdicting concealments by traffickers and smugglers.

In November 2003, Nigeria initiated and hosted the first tripartite seminar on enhanced border control and security with the neighbouring Republics of Benin and Niger, involving the border agents of the three countries. Our Federal Executive Council has approved the communiqué that emerged from the seminar for implementation. Through regular joint border patrol with our neighbours, we have continued the effort to keep track of the influx of illicit small arms into our country, and have sometimes succeeded in arresting and prosecuting transborder traffickers. Nigeria cooperates with the police from other West African countries in tracing the movement of illicit arms across borders through the Interpol bureau in West Africa, in which we have strong representation.

As a country that cherishes an international environment governed by peace and security, Nigeria has spent more than $10 billion in the last 15 years on various efforts to stem the tide of recurrent conflicts in West Africa caused by the illicit circulation in the subregion of an estimated eight million small arms and light weapons. In addition to this, thousands of Nigerian soldiers and civilians have lost their lives in this peacekeeping endeavour in the affected countries. Nigeria continues to provide sanctuary to refugees fleeing from some of these conflicts at enormous financial cost to the Federal Government.

Nigeria's unrelenting fight against illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons was further advanced during the second quarter of this year with the recovery and confiscation of 2,564 illegal firearms and 118,574 assorted munitions. Of those, 1,065 assorted small arms and 953 recovered munitions were publicly destroyed on 24 May 2004, while 1,139 illicit firearms and 1,474 munitions were destroyed on 2 September 2004. Earlier this year, a three-day ECOWAS Conference on combating illicit small arms brokering and trafficking was held in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, from 22 to 24 March, under the sponsorship of the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. The Conference was successful in sensitizing ECOWAS Member States to the problem of illicit brokering and helped in developing a common understanding on ways to address the problem, including subregional coordination mechanisms.

Recently, Nigeria moved to initiate cooperative activities with the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs regarding a national action plan and capacity-building through the training of arms-related security operatives. It is our hope that those nascent proposals will be fully realized.

While we underline the importance of practical measures to eliminate the threat of illicit small arms, Nigeria has always believed in conflict-prevention measures and the pursuit of negotiated solutions to conflicts as the most effective means of minimizing the demand for illicit small arms. The international community should pay particular attention to the need to adopt those measures that provide the best strategies for peace.

In that connection, there is a need to create a good political atmosphere that enhances harmonious relationships at the national and international levels

and a sense of belonging. Emphasis should be given to promoting structures and processes that strengthen democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance, as well as economic recovery and growth, as means of eliminating conflicts and guaranteeing durable peace. That is in consonance with the spirit of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

It has been recognized that there is a lack of international support for development efforts by States in a position to do so, and the crushing debt burden continues to be a major obstacle to the achievement of those lofty objectives. Nonetheless, the Nigerian delegation wishes to urge all nations to be guided by the principle of pacific settlement of disputes, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, as that is the most enduring solution to the problem of illicit small arms.

I cannot conclude this statement without referring to the forthcoming first Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, known as the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World, to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December this year. The Review Conference represents an excellent opportunity not only to evaluate the progress that has been made in implementing the Convention in the last five years but also to chart the course for complete eradication of weapons of that kind by the time of the second Review Conference in 2009. We therefore call upon all States parties to attend the Conference at the highest possible level. As a State party to the Convention, Nigeria has complied with the obligations it has assumed under the instrument, in particular by submitting its transparency report as stipulated under article VII. We endorse the Ministerial Declaration adopted here in New York on 23 September 2004, containing the African Common Position on the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

Ms. Mangray (Guyana): Allow me at the outset to express our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your skilful stewardship as Chairman of this Committee, as well as to all the members of the Bureau. Your leadership thus far has confirmed that our confidence in your abilities is well placed.

Countries currently face serious security threats from existing or newly introduced conditions and challenges. Those include drug trafficking and money-laundering, HIV/AIDS, economic disenfranchisement, poverty and social exclusion, transnational organized crime, environmental problems, including the trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea, natural disasters, the influx of smuggled and sophisticated arms, terrorism and the dumping of criminal deportees from the developed countries. As can be seen, the large majority of cases of conflict are fuelled by small arms and light weapons. The panoply of threats, although varied, is often interlinked and requires a holistic and global response.

As is well known, arms trafficking is linked to activities such as drug trafficking and terrorism, which directly impacts national security. Guyana and other countries in the Caribbean have been especially vulnerable to the armed violence generated by drug trafficking. We would therefore hope that the international instrument on marking and tracing currently being negotiated by the Open-ended Working Group would help in reducing that vulnerability. Perhaps the establishment of a clearing house for international information and other mechanisms endowed with broad monitoring capacities could, hopefully, break the connection between the illicit trade in small arms and criminal activities. Bearing in mind that this serious problem has many technical aspects, it would be wise to provide for input from the existing specialized bodies of the United Nations system.

The international community has been faced with the destabilizing effects and the security implications of the excessive accumulation and transfer of those arms and weapons, as expressed by some of the previous speakers. We would like to stress the negative impact that small arms trafficking has on both the security and the development of States. That is of vital concern, particularly for small States that do not have the technical and financial capability to deal with the threat that the illicit traffic in small arms poses. It may, therefore, be helpful for the text to analyse that impact more thoroughly in order truly to address the problem in all its aspects and to establish the link between disarmament and development. In that regard, my delegation is of the view that reference to the those linkages should be made in the text.

We hope that the instrument will reflect a strong political and legal commitment, which is needed to curb the illicit trafficking in small arms. We are pleased to note that the Open-ended Working Group has produced useful inputs. Its findings offer a good

start to our work. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (A/59/193), published in July this year. My delegation intends to participate in the ongoing consultations and hopes that the outcome document enjoys the prominence it deserves.

As a small and vulnerable State, Guyana attaches importance to the maintenance of international peace and security. In that regard, Guyana has recently ratified and acceded to the Convention on the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated Personnel, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the optional protocol to that Convention, all of which reflects the Government's continued commitment to security issues.

Furthermore, it is now increasingly recognized that the United Nations Disarmament Centres and other regional organizations may be best suited, by virtue of their proximity, to play a valuable role in assisting in finding solutions. As was seen in the campaign against the use of landmines, some of those bodies were instrumental in helping to secure a ban on that horrific class of weapons. They may very well do the same with respect to illicit arms and light weapons.

In conclusion, in the words of a famous writer, strong reasons make strong actions. Our task is made especially urgent by the realization that, despite our perseverance, the achievement of international peace and security remains fraught with pitfalls.

Ms. Oudine (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, I extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Committee. I also congratulate the other member of the Bureau. Finally, I thank your predecessor for the remarkable manner in which he carried out the work of our Committee during the previous session.

Many efforts have been made, and much progress accomplished, aimed at controlling the proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. However, it is a battle that is far from being won.

In fact, never before in the history of humankind have weapons been so numerous. Given the wide range of the problem, as well as the constant threat it poses to security, the illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons is, without any doubt, both a danger to populations and a destabilizing element for States.

Although the unregulated trafficking in millions of weapons may not be the primary cause of a conflict, it certainly increases the resort to violence, delays negotiations that would lead to solutions and increases the suffering of civilian populations.

In addition to the efforts my country has made at the national level, Djibouti is convinced of the need for coordinated multilateral action to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, given the transborder nature of that phenomenon.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a fundamental evil that has a negative impact on security for populations. It is also an obstacle to peace and stability and to economic development in many countries, particularly those in Africa.

In fact, the proliferation of small arms increases insecurity, whether or not there is a conflict. The fact that such weapons are easy to use and are often available for low prices on the illegal market causes them to be available to anyone. That produces a vicious circle, as the presence of weapons worsens insecurity, which, in turn, creates greater demand for those weapons.

Those weapons continue to have a devastating effect on the African continent, given their capacity to exacerbate and prolong conflicts, which has led to the loss of millions of lives, especially the lives of civilians — women and children. In fact, an entire generation of children are forced to become part of the conflict — they grow up within a culture of violence, threatened by death.

The Republic of Djibouti is fully committed to the struggle against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. That is why, once again, my country is co-sponsoring draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.43, "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

Djibouti also participated in, and signed, the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration, at the second Ministerial Review Conference, held in Nairobi on 20 and 21 April 2004. In that regard, Djibouti has already established a national focal point. My country is also delighted at the work being done aimed at the prevention and elimination of, and the struggle against, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We

are particularly pleased at the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an international Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which will enable States to mark and trace illicit weapons, in a reliable and efficient manner. We are confident that the results of the Open-ended Working Group will be a fine contribution to the control of those weapons. That bears witness to the political will and consensus on the continent itself to fight against the proliferation of weapons.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. I have asked for the floor today in order to highlight the particular importance that my country attaches to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Austria, as a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40, would like to thank Thailand for its tireless efforts towards obtaining the broadest possible support for the draft resolution.

Anti-personnel mines are weapons that do not discriminate between combatants and innocent civilians. They cause terrible human suffering long after the end of an armed conflict and constitute a serious impediment to post-conflict reconstruction and development. 143 States have acknowledged that it is only through the total elimination of those weapons that we can eventually solve that global scourge. We therefore strongly urge those States that have so far remained outside the Convention to re-evaluate their position and to join the Convention.

During the past five years, we have made remarkable progress towards the implementation of the Convention's humanitarian, development and disarmament objectives. Nevertheless, anti-personnel mines continue to be used, and still cause many thousands of new victims each year. Universalization remains a challenge. There are still large stockpiles of anti-personnel mines around the globe. Large mined areas still need to be cleared.

Next month — from 29 November to 3 December 2004 — the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World will take place in Kenya. That Conference will be the highest profile event on the landmines issue since the signing of the Convention in Ottawa in 1997. Austria is very honoured to have been designated — in the person of Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch — to preside over this extremely important event.

The substantive preparations for the Nairobi Summit are going very well. There has been great interest and active participation. A wealth of information and input have been provided by the States parties, the United Nations system, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and others.

I would also like to thank the organizers of the regional meetings that have taken place all around the globe during the past months. The meetings — most of them held in mine-affected regions — have provided invaluable input into the preparations for the Nairobi Summit and have contributed to raising awareness for that important event.

The Nairobi Summit offers us the opportunity to achieve five main objectives — first, to bring the landmines issue back into the public consciousness; secondly, to renew and reinforce political and financial commitments; thirdly, to reiterate our responsibility to clear mined areas and to assist victims; fourthly, to establish a comprehensive and concrete plan of action and fifthly, to increase worldwide acceptance of the Convention. The Summit means recommitting ourselves to resolving the outstanding landmine issues. It is, therefore, of particular importance that all States — and in particular the mine-affected States — are represented in Nairobi at the highest possible level during the high-level segment on 2 and 3 December 2004.

The expectations for the Nairobi Summit are very high. The success of the Nairobi Summit and, indeed of the whole Convention, will ultimately be measured by a renewed commitment to solving the problem of anti-personnel mines. That is a real challenge, and we shall succeed in meeting the challenge if we continue to work in the same spirit of partnership that has so far characterized this remarkable and unique process.

Mr. Shaw (Australia): Australia is strongly committed to addressing the problems posed by the proliferation and excessive accumulation of conventional weapons. The illicit possession and use of even a relatively small number of conventional weapons can exacerbate law and order problems and internal conflicts, undermining good governance and

economic development in many regions. We are pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

Australia has been an active player in supporting measures to curb the illicit small arms trade. In particular, we have been working closely with regional partners to address the challenge of small arms proliferation in the Pacific region. This year, Australia collaborated with Fiji, Japan and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in holding a regional small-arms seminar focused on implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action and on model weapons-control legislation developed by the Pacific Islands Forum. The seminar was an important step in a sustained effort by Australia to bring about better regulation and practices to deal with the most serious proliferation issue in our region.

Australia welcomes the considerable progress to date in negotiations on an instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, and looks forward to a successful conclusion to the negotiations. We also recognize the importance of regulating the activities of arms brokers in order to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The commencement of negotiations on brokering will be an important international priority, once marking and tracing negotiations have concluded.

As a strong supporter of the Mine Ban Convention, Australia welcomes the recent accession of Estonia and Papua New Guinea. We look to the forthcoming Review Conference as an opportunity not only to review progress over the previous five years but, more importantly, to shape future directions for mine action. As co-Chairman of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration, Australia will continue to promote awareness and encourage support of activities addressing the needs of mine victims. We are pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction".

Australia welcomes the conclusion of Protocol V, on explosive remnants of war, to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We look forward to the early commencement of negotiations on a new instrument to address humanitarian concerns associated with mines other than anti-personnel mines. Australian is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects".

Mr. Amayo (Kenya): I would like to address an issue of great concern to my country, namely the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention. At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of Thailand for introducing draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.40 on the Ottawa Convention and to assure the Committee of our full support.

Anti-personnel landmines are among the most inhumane weapons devised by man. They maim and kill innocent civilians. They render people destitute by depriving them of their livelihoods in the affected regions. It is therefore no wonder that 143 States parties have now ratified the Ottawa Convention. That commitment has strengthened the international resolve to ban this horrendous weapon. Kenya's commitment to the elimination of the use of landmines is demonstrated in the active role it has played in the implementation of the Convention in the subregion, including through mine-clearance efforts in the Horn of Africa. These efforts complement Kenya's contribution to the promotion of peace, conflict resolution and reconciliation in the subregion. It is only through the total elimination of those weapons that the menace can be obliterated.

Despite the tremendous progress made in the achievement of the Convention's humanitarian and development objectives, the universalization of the Convention is yet to be achieved. The destruction of anti-personnel mines remains technically and financially challenging, as does the demining of affected regions.

In this regard, Kenya is honoured to be hosting the first Review Conference of the States parties to the Convention, to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004. My delegation attaches great importance to this event, which has also been dubbed the 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World.

The Nairobi Summit will be a crucial milestone in the operationalization of the Ottawa Convention. As

the first Review Conference since the entry into force of the Convention in 1999, the Summit will be reviewing critical issues pertaining to the Convention, in particular the status and operation of the Convention, deadlines for demining and the destruction of stockpiles of mines by States parties, as well as assistance to victims of mines. It will take stock of the progress made since its entry into force in 1999 and set the agenda for action over the next five years to ensure the achievement of the humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

Substantive preparations for the Nairobi Summit are at an advanced stage. It is anticipated that world leaders and other dignitaries will attend that important event in recognition of the tremendous achievements made so far by the Convention in advancing human development worldwide.

It is hoped first, that the Nairobi Summit will stress the determination by the international community to free the world of anti-personnel landmines and thereby put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by these weapons. Secondly, it is hoped that it will assess the progress that has been made in ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines since the Convention was established. Thirdly, it is hoped that it will be attended by the majority of States parties and civil society, as well as by world leaders.

It is expected that the Nairobi Summit will be a major forum, enabling participants to discuss developments relating to the global problem of landmines since the historic Convention was signed in Ottawa in 1977 and to come up with viable solutions to the problem.

It is also expected to adopt a powerful declaration and action plan recommitting the parties to overcoming the remaining challenges, in particular putting an end to the production of anti-personnel mines and mobilizing the necessary resources to help badly affected countries to clear mined areas, as well as to assist landmine survivors.

It is also expected to serve as a platform to highlight the plight of Africa as the most mine-affected region and to provide a necessary forum allowing the continent to play a leading role in resolving the anti-personnel landmine problem.

Kenya wishes to recognize and thank all countries and organizations whose efforts have contributed to the preparations for the Nairobi Summit. The stakes are high — but so are the stakes for those in daily danger from anti-personnel mines. The success of the Summit will, therefore, be the success of the international community. On behalf of the people and the Government of Kenya, I wish to take this opportunity to invite the members of this Committee to participate at the highest possible level.

Mr. Costea (Romania): Allow me to begin by reaffirming Romania's full endorsement of yesterday's statement presented on behalf of the European Union (EU) by Ambassador Christiaan Sanders of the Netherlands. For the sake of the effectiveness to which all members of the First Committee aspire, I will be brief and fact- and figures-oriented in my statement.

In reviewing the most important developments that took place this year in my country in the area of conventional arms, the most remarkable achievement by far was the completion of the destruction of anti-personnel landmines. An official ceremony organized on 25 March, significantly entitled "Romania free of anti-personnel mines", finalized the process of eliminating one million anti-personnel landmines one year ahead of the deadline set forth by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and just a few days before the fifth anniversary of its entry into force.

A month prior to this national accomplishment, on 2 and 3 February, Romania hosted the Reay Group workshop on the progress in meeting the aims of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines in southeastern Europe. On this occasion, representatives of the countries in the region, of donor States and of international structures involving mine action assessed progress on such issues as the universalization of the Convention in our region, the stage of stockpile destruction and challenges yet to be faced, especially with respect to victim assistance, resource mobilization and national implementation.

We believe that all these actions provide concrete and significant evidence of our region's commitment to the goals of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines. That commitment will be appropriately recorded at the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World. It is also our strong belief that the lessons learned in this respect

and, more specifically, the lessons learned through promoting regional cooperation could be quite useful for other regions that are still struggling to rid themselves of this murderous legacy of past conflicts.

Romania also attaches particular importance to developments under the framework of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). I would like to take this opportunity to announce that we are in the process of preparing the internal package necessary for the ratification of Protocol V of the CCW on explosive remnants of war.

We take similar interest in the developments with regard to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms. While taking national action with respect to small arms and light weapons and ammunition surpluses destruction, marking, record-keeping, expert control — including brokering — and tracing, we truly hope that all these issues will soon be debated and agreed upon on within the framework of the United Nations, in order to eradicate the scourge of these types of weapons and eliminate the unjustified humanitarian suffering they cause.

Ms. Mtshali (South Africa): South Africa is committed to a policy of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control that covers all weapons of mass destruction and extends to concerns relating to the proliferation of conventional weapons.

The current stalemate on issues related to nuclear weapons in particular is in stark contrast to the progress made on issues related to conventional arms. Indeed, substantive meetings relating to small arms, anti-personnel mines and other conventional weapons deemed to have indiscriminate effects or causing superfluous injury fill our disarmament calendar. The proliferation and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons continues to pose a threat to the security and stability of many nations, inhibits their development and undermines good governance. The human suffering caused by these weapons needs to be addressed urgently, in a practical and action-oriented manner.

South Africa therefore attaches great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The numerous small arms initiatives being undertaken at the national, regional and global levels is a testimony to the commitment by Member States and the non-governmental community to implement and facilitate the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action on small arms.

In approximately 18 months, we will be reviewing this Programme of Action on small arms and, more importantly, we will decide how to further proceed with actions to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The vehicle to further strengthen our collective action on small arms is the preparatory process for the Review Conference and the Conference itself. An important meeting leading to this review conference is the second Biennial Meeting on small arms scheduled for June 2005.

We should not only have already started with our substantive preparations for these meetings, but we should also, at an early stage, focus on procedural issues such as reaching an understanding on who will chair the Biennial Meeting and the Review Conference itself. Early preparations will greatly facilitate the successful outcome we are all working for.

South Africa continues to believe that, for a tracing instrument on illicit small arms and light weapons to be effective and practical, it is important that the scope of such an instrument be as comprehensive in nature as possible and that it should not be restricted to State-owned small arms and light weapons only, but also include civilian-owned weapons of this nature. We also continue to believe that the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons should examine how it could include in such an instrument the issue of marking, record-keeping and tracing of ammunition and explosives, as it is widely accepted that these are some of the problems associated with small arms and light weapons.

Much progress has been made in eradicating anti-personnel mines. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction has established itself as the norm in banning anti-personnel mines and the clearance of mined areas, with more than 140 States now adhering to the Convention. We will be gathering in Nairobi later this year to consolidate the achievements in banning this deadly weapon, and we

will be planning the priorities for the next five years at the first Review Conference of the Convention. South Africa believes that the Review Conference should evaluate our achievements and recognize the challenges of the next five years. The need for us to intensify our efforts to mobilize resources to clear mined areas and assist those who have become victims of this lethal weapon is critical to our efforts to face these challenges.

South Africa therefore supports the adoption of an action plan that is realistic and achievable, and which would guide the implementation of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines until the second review conference. In this regard, the Common African Position on Anti-Personnel Landmines, presented here in New York at the African Union ministerial meeting last month, sends a powerful message on Africa's implementation priorities in the field of mine action and the banning of anti-personnel mines.

South Africa welcomes the constructive discussions that were held in the context of the experts meetings of the States parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). South Africa believes that progress has been made, especially on the issue of compliance. At the meeting of States parties to be held next month, a decision must be taken on how to take this issue forward. South Africa also welcomes the adoption of the additional Protocol to the CCW on explosive remnants of war and is in the process of preparing its instrument of consent to be bound by this Protocol so as to enable it to enter into force at an early date.

In conclusion, an agenda that could rapidly lead us to a world free of anti-personnel mines is in place, and progress has been achieved in dealing with the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The political will and the determination to address the issue of conventional weapons in a constructive manner should, therefore, be sustained.

Mr. Mine (Japan): The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation is a particularly destabilizing factor in post-conflict situations, as it disrupts humanitarian aid operations and hinders rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

The Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in July 2001, is a historic landmark, representing the collective will of the international community to address such problems. Japan intends to continue implementing the Programme of Action in cooperation with the international community.

Japan served as Chair at the first United Nations Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action. It was the first United Nations meeting to consider this matter, and the report of the meeting, with the Chairperson's summary annexed to it, was adopted by consensus, bringing the meeting to a successful conclusion. Japan hopes that all States will make efforts to reinforce their commitment to the Programme of Action and will take concrete steps to strengthen national, regional and global efforts to tackle the problem of small arms and light weapons in the lead-up to the second Biennial Meeting next year, as well as to the 2006 United Nations Review Conference.

Japan, for its part, has been actively contributing to the implementation of this Programme. In August 2004, my country, in cooperation with Australia and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, organized a seminar on the problems of small arms in the Pacific region. The seminar was entitled "Regional Seminar on Small Arms and Light Weapons for the South Pacific". Japan continues to make efforts in this sphere.

My country welcomed the convening last June of the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group on tracing and marking, and we sincerely invite all Member States to continue their active participation in its remaining sessions in order to ensure a positive outcome.

Japan also welcomes the broad-based consultations held by the Secretary-General with all Member States and with interested regional and subregional organizations to advance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

Nevertheless, in order to tackle the problems posed by small arms and light weapons in a comprehensive manner, we must focus not only on their supply but also on reducing the demand for such weapons in the long term. To deal with these problems, Japan has given its wholehearted support and has been a key provider of funds to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) project. This was

a research project conducted over the past two years on weapons-for-development projects in Albania, Cambodia and Mali. The UNIDIR project is an extremely useful tool in tackling the problem of demand for these arms, providing us with a follow-up evaluation of small arms and light weapons projects, which can be used to develop a framework for future donor projects.

Japan will spare no effort to help affected countries in this area of urgent priority.

The upcoming Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World will be a watershed event in the life of the Ottawa Convention. It will review the progress made since the entry into force of the Convention and will identify the remaining challenges we will have to address in years to come. In this light, I would like to emphasize that the crucial task of the Nairobi Summit is to promote universalization of the Convention and to facilitate mining action in the field.

It is important to note here that this year marks the mid-point in the decade ending in 2009, the first 10-year mine clearance deadline under Article 5 of the Convention. In this context, we would like to remind the Committee that things are happening in the field. Japan has actively directed its energy and resources towards mine action, including mine clearance, as shown in the cases of Cambodia and Afghanistan. Also, Japan has been actively engaged in the Nairobi Summit process and will continue to be so.

Mr. Verma (India): India remains deeply concerned that conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, continue to pose a grave danger to the security of States. Their indiscriminate and irresponsible use, particularly by non-State actors, has caused enormous humanitarian concern. Such weapons have disrupted political stability and social harmony, derailed pluralism and democracy and hampered growth and development. They have also fuelled international terrorism and internal conflicts.

Multilateral diplomacy has achieved a modest measure of success in dealing with the threat posed by illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The adoption, by consensus, of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in July 2001, reflected the commitment of the international community to deal with this issue. The Programme of Action outlines a realistic, achievable and comprehensive approach aimed at addressing the problem at the national, regional and global levels. India, however, was disappointed that the Conference that adopted the Programme of Action in July 2001 could not agree to adopt measures to prevent the sales of arms to non-State groups. This is an issue that the international community needs to address during the Biennial Meeting of States in 2005 and the first Review Conference in 2006. Those meetings will also provide an opportunity to review the effectiveness of the Programme of Action in achieving its objectives and to consider further measures to strengthen and promote its implementation.

India had the privilege of chairing the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and Light Weapons. India also actively participates in the Open-ended Working Group, which is currently negotiating an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace in a timely and reliable manner illicit small arms and light weapons. We accord high priority to this exercise, and we are fully committed to it. India favours a legally binding instrument and the inclusion of ammunition and explosives within the scope of the instrument, if there is consensus on those proposals.

India will also pursue the objective of achieving a non-discriminatory, universal and global ban on anti-personnel mines that addresses the legitimate defence requirements of States. Landmines continue to play an important role in the defence of States that have long land borders with difficult and inhospitable terrains. The process of achieving the complete elimination of anti-personnel mines will be facilitated by the availability of militarily effective, non-lethal and cost-effective alternative technologies.

Multilateral processes, when reinforced by adequate political will on the part of key States, can achieve good results. We have achieved considerable success in dealing with the humanitarian concerns posed by indiscriminate use of landmines. Protocol II under the umbrella of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), dealing with landmines and booby traps, was amended in 1996 to make it more effective in reducing the danger posed by landmines. The scope of the Convention was extended in 2001 to cover internal conflicts. In 2003, another Protocol was added to the CCW to deal with the dangers posed to civilians by explosive remnants of war. This was a signal achievement on which we could build further under the CCW process. India is strongly committed to

the CCW Convention and has ratified its four Protocols, including Amended Protocol II. The process of ratification of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war is under way.

India had the privilege of chairing the CCW process during 2002 and 2003, when the Working Group on Explosive Remnants of War was engaged in negotiations to conclude Protocol V on explosive remnants of war. A working group within the CCW Group of Governmental Experts continues to consider implementation of existing principles of international humanitarian law relevant to explosive remnants of war. It is also studying possible preventive measures aimed at improving the design of certain specific types of munitions, including submunitions, in order to minimize the humanitarian risk of those munitions becoming explosive remnants of war. Another working group, the Working Group on Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines, has the responsibility to consider proposals with the aim of elaborating appropriate recommendations. The Indian delegation has made constructive contributions to the deliberations of those bodies. We hope that the forthcoming session of the Group of Governmental Experts in November 2004 will provide crucial momentum for both working groups.

We shall work for steady progress in the areas of small arms and light weapons and the CCW process. We hope the process will be extended to other areas of conventional disarmament, leading towards the goal of general and complete disarmament.

Mr. Lew Kwang-chul (Republic of Korea): The 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on small arms identified the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons as a key mechanism for national, regional and international efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate those weapons. My delegation is pleased to note that the first session of the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing, held in June this year, took a promising first step under the able leadership of Ambassador Thalmann of Switzerland. It is particularly encouraging to note that the first session successfully identified key issues surrounding the three main areas of marking, record keeping and international cooperation.

The nature of the instrument is another key issue that should be resolved in the next round of negotiations. Despite the formidable tasks ahead of us, we are confident that the international community, in the spirit of cooperation and harmony, can achieve another successful outcome in the history of disarmament. As Ambassador Thalmann said in the informal consultations yesterday, now is the time to muster our collective wisdom.

The Republic of Korea participated actively and constructively in the discussions of the first session and stands ready to lend its continued support to future deliberations. At the same time, we also support the efforts of the international community to deal with the illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons.

The Republic of Korea has co-sponsored the draft resolution on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament. Mine assistance and assistance on small arms control can be particularly useful tools to achieve the goal of practical disarmament.

This year, my Government, through the United Nations Development Programme, made a financial contribution of $100,000 to African countries to support mine action programmes, and it is considering further ways to contribute to easing the problems associated with small arms in Africa.

Finally, the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Since joining the CCW in May 2001, the Republic of Korea has participated in various efforts to further develop the CCW regime. My delegation welcomes the adoption of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war. The entry into force of that Protocol will greatly contribute to lessening the serious humanitarian impact of explosive remnants of war.

Like last year, the Republic of Korea will co-sponsor the draft resolution on CCW tabled by the Swedish delegation.

Mr. Esenli (Turkey): Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, allow me, Sir, to express my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that under your able leadership the First Committee will be successfully guided through its challenging agenda. I also assure you of my delegation's full cooperation throughout the proceedings.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement on conventional weapons made yesterday by the Ambassador of the Netherlands on behalf of the

European Union. We fully endorse the views and objectives expressed in the statement.

I also wish to avail myself of this opportunity to share some observations on specific aspects regarding the anti-personnel landmines. The international community has long endeavoured to take effective measures to prevent the use of anti-personnel landmines and rid ourselves of that scourge that causes widespread human suffering. The General Assembly resolutions calling on Member States to implement a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines has constituted the basis of those efforts since 1993.

The Ottawa Convention, which entered into force in 1999, is a major achievement of the international community as it moves towards the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines. In that context, the participation of non-governmental organizations has been instrumental in finalizing and implementing the Convention. We sincerely hope that with the joint initiative of Turkey and Greece, which became States Parties to the Ottawa Convention simultaneously on 1 March this year, efforts aimed at demining our region in particular and the world in general will gain a new impetus and vigour.

Although enormous progress has been made, we believe that there are still considerable challenges ahead of us regarding the universalization and full implementation of the Convention. We therefore urge all States not parties to the Ottawa Convention to promote, support and advance the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine victims, the development of mine education programmes and the removal of anti-personnel mines planted in their territories, whenever they are in a position to do so.

My delegation is hopeful that the first Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, to be held in Nairobi at the end of next month, will reinvigorate the international community with respect to universalization of the Convention and fulfilment by States parties of their treaty-related commitments.

In conclusion, since I have the floor, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the President-designate of the first Review Conference, Ambassador Petritsch of Austria, and his team for the draft documents they have prepared to facilitate our work in Nairobi.

I also wish to thank the delegation of Thailand for the draft resolution on the Ottawa Convention (A/C.1/59/L.40), which we are pleased to co-sponsor.

Mr. Grigore (Republic of Moldova): Since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, I join preceding speakers in sincerely congratulating you, Sir, on your election to serve as Chairman of the First Committee, and we extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

I would like to take this opportunity to address the question of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to inform the Committee of the actions undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Moldova with respect to small arms and light weapons.

While the international community is trying to eliminate the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, the problem of small arms and light weapons also occupies an important place on the agenda of international gatherings. Hundreds of thousands of people are killed and injured every year by such weapons. The stability and security of many countries and entire regions have been seriously impaired, and their prospects for development and prosperity have been severely reduced, and even denied, by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The Moldovan Government is strongly committed to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and is undertaking all necessary efforts in this respect.

The Republic of Moldova is actively involved in efforts at the regional and subregional levels to establish mechanisms to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Moldova participates in various regional initiatives dealing with the issues of cross-border illicit trafficking and organized crime, including those created by Interpol, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), and the Central European Initiative. As a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Republic of Moldova is committed to implementing the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and participates in information exchange among

member States. Moldova has adopted a number of norms and mechanisms to ensure the development of cooperative action to tackle cross-border crime in Southeastern Europe, in cooperation with the SECI Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime.

From 4 to 5 March 2004, the Government of Moldova, in cooperation with the Governments of Switzerland and the Netherlands and the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), hosted an international conference entitled "Countering Small Arms and Light Weapons Trafficking in the Black Sea Region — Improving Regional Standards". The meeting brought together experts from 24 countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to discuss a set of issues relating to small arms trafficking, including border security and border management, with a view to contributing to the enhancement of regional standards in the small arms and light weapons field. It focused on the need for enhanced border management and information exchange and for cooperation between law-enforcement bodies, at the national and regional levels.

The unresolved conflict in the eastern region of Moldova, which is controlled by a separatist regime, remains a serious threat to the political and economic stability of my country and to the security of the region as whole. The lack of control over the region and its borders strongly limits the Moldovan Government's ability to implement and enforce its commitments to restrain small arms and light weapons proliferation across the entire territory of Moldova.

This region remains an area of illegal production and trafficking in small arms. The separatist authorities are interested in perpetuating the illegal trade in weapons, as this provides a continual source of funding for them. Since 1993 it has become one of the most important factors in the economic and military policy of the separatist authorities. The Transdniestrian regime has industrial facilities for the production of light weapons, such as assault rifles, machine guns, multiple and mobile rocket launcher systems, mortars, anti-personnel mines and anti-personnel grenade launchers.

Given the "transparency" of the Transdniestrian section of the eastern border of Moldova, there are no guarantees that the illegally produced or trafficked armaments are not reaching other conflict zones. Furthermore, the small arms and light weapons trafficked from this region lack serial numbers, which makes them ideal for organized criminal networks. The Government of the Republic of Moldova stands firm in its position that the deployment of an international monitoring mission under the auspices of the OSCE and European Union along the border between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine will substantially contribute to the prevention and elimination of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and will help in identifying a solution to the problem in the eastern part of Moldova.

Another issue that I must raise is that of the huge arsenal of weapons stored in the eastern part of Moldova. In countries affected by similar conflicts, the presence of large stockpiles of weapons and ammunition is particularly dangerous, because of the risk of their being stolen for use by paramilitary groups or sold together with illegally produced armaments. The complete withdrawal of foreign arms and troops, as provided for in the decisions of the OSCE Istanbul Summit of 1999, has still not been achieved, and in 2004 that process has stopped. So far, only 20,000 tons of the 42,000 tons of existing ammunition have been removed from the region.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova would like to express its gratitude to the OSCE member States that have generously contributed over $20 million to the voluntary fund aimed at facilitating, among other things, the withdrawal or destruction of foreign arms, ammunition and equipment from Moldovan territory. We call for the active involvement of the OSCE and other interested organizations in the complete withdrawal of foreign troops and weapons, and in stabilization efforts in the region.

The Republic of Moldova supports a comprehensive approach to the problems of small arms and light weapons and would like to join with those who have emphasized the importance of international assistance and cooperation in order to make national, regional and global efforts aimed at curbing the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons successful.

Mr. Shloma (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus, sharing the concerns of the international community in connection with the humanitarian aspects of the problem of mines, fully

supports the prohibition on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

On 1 March 2004 the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction entered into force in our country. We have the world's seventh largest arsenal of such mines, which we inherited from the former Soviet Union. We do not produce, export or use anti-personnel landmines, neither in our country nor anywhere else in the world. Nevertheless, guided by common interests, we have ratified that Convention.

By a decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 6 May 2004, a national mechanism was established for implementing the Convention, which provides for informing the United Nations Secretary-General about transparency measures instituted within the time frame set in the Convention.

In compliance with the provisions of the Convention, our country must destroy its landmine stockpiles within four years. Belarus requires considerable financial and technological resources to ensure the elimination of more than four million anti-personnel mines. It should be noted, moreover, that conventional anti-personnel mines can be disposed of either through incineration or through open detonation. Such methods, however, because of ecological concerns, cannot be applied to mines with liquid explosives, and we have 3.6 million such mines. Under those circumstances, we appeal to Governments and international governmental and non-governmental organizations to assist the Republic of Belarus in its mine stockpile elimination efforts. We will be grateful for any and all kinds of technical, technological and financial assistance.

Belarus attaches special importance to developing cooperation with the United Nations, which is playing an important coordinating role in the sphere of anti-personnel mines. In March 2000, Belarus hosted a regional workshop on landmine issues. In August 2000, Belarus hosted a United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) assessment mission. Both the workshop participants and the members of the United Nations assessment mission came to the conclusion that there was a need to provide Belarus with international assistance in dealing with the destruction of anti-personnel mines.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction has become a powerful tool providing us with an opportunity to achieve the full elimination and full prohibition of anti-personnel mines, which have caused such enormous human sufferings on all continents. I hope that the developing practice and tradition of strict implementation of the Convention will help all of us to carry out our mission properly.

Underscoring the consistency of its policy in the sphere of international security and arms control, the Republic of Belarus has once again become a sponsor of the draft resolution entitled, "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction" (A/C.1/59/L.40).

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): If there are no other requests for the floor, we will now start the second segment of our meeting, which is a segment without records or recordings.

The formal portion of the meeting concluded at 12.35 p.m.